

## GUYANA CUSTOMS

### Greetings:

Relatives and friends may greet each other with a hug, and between women, a brief kiss on each cheek.

A handshake is the norm between business and professional associates. Young people say *Hi* or *Hi, man, how you doin'?* They may add backslapping or a “high five.” They might also ask *Wha' it saying?*, to which the response is either a “thumbs up” signal (for good) or an open palm turned down (for bad).

Tribal greetings vary according to the language. The Wapisiani use *Kaimen Pugar* (roughly, “Peace be with you”). The Machushi say *Morogeh koman honah* (I'm glad to see you) and respond with *Enah* (“Yes,” meaning “Hello”).

### Gestures:

The Guyanese talk with their hands, especially when angry or excited. They point their fingers in one another's faces to stress a point and shake the forefinger to show their displeasure.

### Holidays:

Nearly all Guyanese celebrate the Christmas season with gift-giving and feasting.

Boxing Day (26 Dec.) is a day to relax after Christmas. New Year's Day is also quiet, as revelers recuperate from the parties of Old Year's Night. Republic Day (23 Feb.) marks the date Guyana became the Cooperative Republic of Guyana. The holiday is also known as *Mashramani*, a word used by indigenous people for the celebration at the end of a cooperative project. Fireworks and a presidential address are traditional on Independence Day (26 May).

On CARICOM Day (first Monday in July), the Guyanese celebrate their ties with Caribbean nations. Freedom Day (first Monday in August) marks the end of slavery.

Easter (Friday–Monday) is popular and features kite flying along the seawall as a rite of spring. *Devali*, the fall Hindu Festival of Lights, features a light parade.

*Phagwah* welcomes spring, and the Indo-Guyanese greet each other with a sprinkling of water, powder, and *abeer* (a red liquid). Official Muslim holidays are *Id ul Fitr*, the feast at the end of *Ramadan*, and *Id ul Azha*, the Feast of the Sacrifice. For the latter, people distribute food and clothing to the poor. Muslims also commemorate *Yaum an Nibi* (Muhammad's birthday), but it is not a public holiday.

### Recreation:

Cricket is a national obsession, while *football* (soccer) comes in a distant second.